



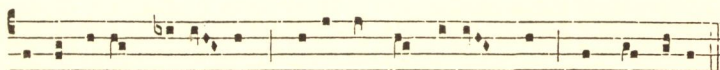
The Marian Library Newsletter

No. 33 (New Series)

Winter, 1996-97

Advent and Christmas Hymn and Meditation:

“The Lord Will Give Mercy, and Our Earth Will Give its Fruit”



Burning bush and hidden Ark,
Pillar glowing in the dark,
And fountain sealed:
What the Scripture prophesied,
What their types presignified,
Now stand revealed.

Blessed Virgin, you believed
First of all, and then conceived
What you had heard;
There you chose the better part,
Pondering within your heart
The Incarnate Word.

Wholly free from Adam's guilt;
Dwelling-place that Wisdom built;
The second Eve,
Apple of your Maker's eye,
Whom the serpent's cunning lie
Could not deceive.

Stock of Jesse, Rose in flower,
House of God and Ivory Tower;
The full-of-grace;
Tent from which the lordly Sun
Leapt exulting forth to run
His giant race:

When the world was half-asleep,
But for shepherds with their sheep,
And Simeon,
At the turning-point of night
Like a star emitting light,
You bore God's Son.

Glory of Jerusalem
Since the child at Bethlehem
Is Christ the Lord,
Show us how the Trinity,
Now and for eternity
Should be adored.

During the Advent and Christmas season, the Church's attention is focused on the mystery of the Incarnation. Because Mary is the little plot of earth where the Word pitched His tent among us, the members of the Church assemble around the Virgin Mary, the dwelling place of the Lord. The Church's prayer is "Grant us, O Lord, the grace to welcome your mercy in the midst of your Temple."



Wood Carved—Poland

The mercy of God is our Savior, who is the love of God that comes to us. God is love; but when God come to meet us in human form, His name is mercy. Mercy is love which comes to relieve misery. We continually receive this mercy in the midst of the temple which is the Virgin Mary, *Mater misericordiae*, the Mother of Mercy.

A frequent refrain of the liturgy throughout the Advent season is "The Lord will give mercy and our earth will give its fruit."

God's coming to us is favor and kindness. The loving kindness of our God has appeared in the person of our Savior.

Our salvation is the fruit of our cooperation with God. The mercy, favor, tenderness, care, love, and joy of our

Tune: *Laetabundus* 774 774
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68 Goldielie Road
Sutton Coldfield
West Midlands B73 5PG
England

This hymn of Michael Hodgetts was submitted to the Marian Hymn Search conducted by the Mariological Society of America (1995-96). Mr. Hodgetts has been a translator of ICEL poetic texts since 1976, was chairman of the Church Music Association of England, and wrote the winning hymn for the search conducted by the Shrine of Our Lady of Knock.

God come to meet us. Our good earth—our Virgin Mother—receives God's gift and gives her fruit (Communion, Psalm 84: 13). The Church refers to the Blessed Virgin as similar to the good earth, "our earth." How moving is this claim of possession on the part of the Church! The Virgin is all ours.

The Virgin—there can be no question about it—is our earth, molded of our clay. "Lord, you loved your land, brought Jacob back, forgot our guilt" (Psalm 85:2). What riches hide under the image of earth. God became one of us—who are but dust and ashes. And the Lord God, like a potter, made us from the clay of the earth (Genesis 2:7). But what splendid fruit this earth produced! Let the heavens rain down the just one as dew, and our earth will open and germinate a new wonder, the Savior. Truth—"I am the Truth"—shall be born out of the earth and justice (the Father) will look on from above.

Psalm 85, so appropriate to Advent and Christmas, describes how God, angry because of sin and rebellion, forsook anger and displeasure, showed mercy and granted deliverance. In this land of ours, the divine glory finds a home; justice and peace are united in one embrace. Fidelity sprouts up from the earth, and justice comes down from heaven. The key words—heaven (God) and earth

(Mary)—open the secret that mercy and truth and peace are gathered up in one Christ, Son of God and Son of Mary.

The liturgical texts speak to hearts ready to listen. Jerusalem is the Holy City, but it also suggests the Temple, the place of God's dwelling, that is, Mary. "Rejoice, Daughter of Sion, and rejoice exceedingly, Daughter of Jerusalem. Alleluia." From the Virgin comes His beauty: "Out of Sion His comeliness." To experience the mystery of Christmas, we must enter the abode in Jerusalem, the house of God, Mary. Living in Mary, we read the liturgical texts and discover their meaning. "I rejoice in those words which are said to me." No joy is like the voice of God whispering the divine mysteries to the person who listens with faith. If we believe, we enter into the House of God, that is, into the mystery that is Mary, and we dwell there with Jesus. "With joy I heard them say, 'Let us go to the Lord's house!'" (Psalm 122).

In the liturgy of Advent the Virgin appears in many mantles, but whatever be the image, God is always with her. In her, we find the life and mercy from the Lord.

—Vincent Vasey, S.M., *The Marianist: The Marian Library Magazine*, (December, 1962).

Mary in the Advent and Christmas Liturgy

The liturgical seasons and feasts evolved over the first five centuries of Christian history. From apostolic times, Christians assembled for the Eucharist on Sunday (*Didache* 14, 1). The annual celebration of the Passover dates from the second century. The earliest individuals commemorated in the liturgy were the martyrs, as the Eucharist was celebrated at their tombs on their *dies natalis*, the anniversary of their death, a practice which Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258) regarded as ancient. However, it was not until the fourth century that a date for Christmas was established at Rome. In opposition to the pagan celebration of the sun during the winter solstice, the placing of Christ's birth on December 25 announced that he was the true Unconquerable Sun.

From the beginning, the celebration of Christ's birth in the West had a Marian dimension. The opening prayer from the *Gelasian Sacramentary* spoke of the day as "sanctified through the incarnation of your word and the birth from the virgin." The homilies on the virgin birth and the virginity of Mary given by Zeno of Verona (d.380) and Augustine (d. 430) could well have been given on Christmas. The responses in the office spoke of Mary: "Today, for our sake, the King of heaven chose to be born of his virgin mother." The psalms and antiphons for the Christmas office were also used for Marian feasts. By the sixth century, the station church for the nativity of Christ was St. Mary Major, and, at an early date, relics from the crib

were enshrined in that church making it known as St. Mary at the Crib. In the Roman rite, Christmas still retains a Marian dimension; it is the day when "the Church both adores the Savior and venerates his glorious Mother" (MC 5).

In 1933, Bernard Botte identified January 1 as the "the first Marian feast of the Roman liturgy," introduced around 560-590. The identification was based mainly on Botte's discovery of the title for the feast—*Natale S. Mariae*.



Silhouette Crèche—
Shaker Village

Although identification has been contested, the texts for the day are Marian. The opening prayer for the day, from the *Gregorian Sacramentary*, speaks of the "rewards of eternal salvation" bestowed on humanity through the "fruitful virginity" of Blessed Mary. The preface for the day, in both the Gelasian and Gregorian Sacramentary, contained excerpts from a sermon of Augustine: "Feed, O mother, the one who is our food; feed the one who is the bread come down from heaven." The celebration on January 1 was overshadowed with additional Marian feasts in the seventh century, and it lost the Marian title. It was later known as the octave of Christmas, the commemoration of the circumcision of Christ, and, most recently, as the World Day of Peace. Whatever its title, the texts of the mass and the office have retained the Marian references. The calendar of 1969 restored the Marian title, "in conformity with ancient indication of the liturgy of the city of Rome," designating it as the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, intended to commemorate the "part played by Mary in the mystery of salvation" (MC 5).

The development of Advent as a preparatory period for Christmas was a feature distinctive of the churches in the West. In Rome, the last part of the Advent season had a Marian resonance. The gospels of the Annunciation and the Visitation were read on the ember days before the feast (now they are read on December 20 and December 21). The Marian character of the last part of the Advent season has been restored to the Roman rite in the liturgical texts of Vatican II. In the current *Lectionary*, the first reading for the fourth Sunday of Advent for each year of the three-year cycle provides a selection from one of the prophetic books related to Mary. The gospel for the fourth Sunday is the Annunciation in Year B and the Visitation in Year C.

For December 17-23, the *Sacramentary* (1972) includes a set of collects from the sixth-century "rotulus of

Ravenna." These texts, which reflect the influence of Peter Chrysologus, bishop of Ravenna, 432-450, extol the divine motherhood and the virginity of Mary:

God, you both established and redeemed human nature, and you decreed that your Word should take on human flesh in a womb marked by perpetual virginity. . . . (December 17),

God, you were pleased to show the world the splendor of your glory by means of the child born of the holy Virgin. . . . (December 19),

God, at the Angel's message the most pure Virgin received your unutterable Word within herself. She became the dwelling place of the Godhead, and was filled with the light of the Holy Spirit. . . ." (December 20).

The prefaces suggested in the *Sacramentary* for December 17-23 have a Marian orientation. "The Virgin Mary bore him in her womb with love beyond all telling" (*Advent II*). "As ruin fell upon us through the ancient adversary, so in the Virgin Mary, the daughter of Sion, was conceived the one who would nourish us with the bread of the angels, whose birth would bring salvation and peace to all the world" (*Advent IV*). The Office of Readings of the Liturgy of the Hours provides selections from the Marian writings of Irenaeus, Ambrose, and Bernard of Clairvaux on December 19, 20, and 21.

In the Roman rite, Advent is *the* Marian season, and its liturgical books provide more references to Mary for that period than at any other season. Celebrating Advent as the Marian season provides the liturgical context to assure that devotion to Mary will not be separated from Christ, its natural point of reference (MC 5).

Marian Spirituality and the Interreligious Dialogue

The 47th annual meeting of the Mariological Society of America was held on the campus of Villanova University, Philadelphia, May 29-31, 1996. The theme for the 1996 meeting was "Marian Spirituality and the Interreligious Dialogue." Ecumenical dialogues have occurred between the Catholic Church and the other Christian churches during the last thirty years. Alongside the ecumenical dialogue, there is also the interreligious dialogue, between Catholicism and the major religions of the world.

The interreligious dialogue has its origins in Vatican II's "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions" (1965). This document speaks of the respect which the Church has for "the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in

many ways from her own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of truth which enlightens all people." The dialogue with the world religions is coordinated by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and, in the United States, the Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Pope John Paul II has made no little contribution to advancing the interreligious dialogue. Many of his insights are contained in *Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflections and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (1991) from the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. As the title indicates, dialogue and proclamation are inseparable, are

both integral to the Church's evangelizing mission.

The interreligious dialogue, according to the pope, is not limited to theological exchange between scholars. It also involves dialogue dealing with social problems and the challenges facing humanity. Inter-religious dialogue deals with spirituality and religious experience where persons, "rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual riches, for instance with regard to prayer and contemplation, faith and ways of searching for God or the Absolute" (#42).

The Mariological Society's program was one of the first programs to relate Mary to the interreligious dialogue. The historical figure of Mary is present in some of the world's religions; in others, there are traits of spirituality which we identify as Marian. The spirituality of first-century Judaism contributes to a better understanding of Mary, daughter of Israel, and true child of Israel. (See Lawrence E. Frizzell's "Mary and Biblical Heritage," *Marian Studies* 46 [1995] 26-40).

Mary is mentioned thirty-four times in the Qu'ran, the only woman mentioned by name, and Islam pays Mary its highest compliment, namely, that she is a person of faith and of submission to God, a model to be imitated by all Muslims. In some parts of the Middle East, Muslims, particularly women, visit Marian shrines to seek her intercession. Speaking of Muslims, Vatican II had said, "Although not acknowledging him as God, they [Muslims] venerate Jesus as a prophet, his virgin Mother they also honor and even at times invoke."

In the great religions of Asia, there are female images of compassion which bear a similitude to Mary. Maria Reis-Habito's presentation at this meeting spoke of how Japanese Christians transformed the Buddhist deity of compassion into a thinly veiled image of Mary, known as *Maria-Kannon*.

In a recent study, Francis X. Clooney, S.J., has shown the similarity between Christian and Hindu texts. As you read the following poem of the Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore, place the verses of Mary's Magnificat alongside the lines:

Thou has made me endless, such is thy
pleasure.
This frail vessel thou emptiest again and
again, and fillest it ever with fresh life.
This little flute of a reed thou has carried over
hills and dales, and hast breathed through it
melodies eternally new.
At the immortal touch of thy hands my little
heart loses its limits in joy and gives birth to
utterance ineffable.
Thy infinite gifts come to me only on these
very small hands of mine.
Ages pass, and still though pourest, and still
there is room to fill.

In *Redemptoris missio*, Pope John Paul II wrote, "God does not fail to be present in many ways, not only to individuals but also to entire people through their spiritual riches, of which their religions are the main and essential expression" (55). There is also a sense in which

we join others in the search for God. At the end of the day of prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage for peace with leaders of the world religions at Assisi, Pope John Paul II said: "Let us see here an anticipation of what God would like the developing history of humanity to be: a fraternal

journey in which we accompany one another toward the transcendental goal which is set before us" (*Dialogue* 79). The Virgin Mary can also be seen in this context. "In Mary is summed up the longing and searching of the whole human race for God" (Society of Mary's *Rule of Life*, 7).



Korean Madonna



The conferences given at this meeting will be available in *Marian Studies* 1996 (available February, 1997—\$15.00 prepaid). *Marian Studies* 1995, "Faith, Mary, Culture," is currently available (\$15.00 prepaid). The 1995 issue contains the following articles: "Mary and the Biblical Heritage," (Lawrence E. Frizzell); "*Criollo* Patriotism in Guadalupe's First Evangelist, Miguel Sanchez, 1594-1674" (Martinus Cawley, O.C.S.O.); "Asian Women's Mariology in Christological Context" (Joseph Cheah, O.S.M.); "Images of Mary in American Popular Periodicals, 1900-1980" (Una Cadegan); "The Origins of Marian Devotion in Latin American Cultures in the United States" (Stephen Holler); "Canonical Considerations regarding Alleged Apparitions" (Michael Smith Foster). Address all inquiries to MSA Secretariat; The Marian Library; University of Dayton 45469-1390 (phone 937 229-4294).



The Mariological Society's next meeting will be in San Antonio, Texas, May 21-23, 1997. The topic for the meeting is taken from the encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*: "The Virgin Mary: Mother of God, Icon of the Church, Intercessor: Ecumenical Perspectives." The opening address will be given by Msgr. John A. Rodano, secretary for the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

International Mariological Congress, Czestochowa

The twelfth International Mariological Congress took place at Czestochowa, Poland, August 18-24, 1996, at the shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa. (In Polish, the shrine is referred to as Jasna Góra—the Bright Mountain.) The theme for the congress, as determined by the Pontifical Marian Academy, was, “Mary, Mother of the Lord, in the Mystery of Salvation, Celebrated Today in the Holy Spirit, by the Churches of the East and West.” Immediately after the Mariological Congress, there was the nineteenth Marian Congress, with the theme “Mary and the Eucharist.”

In his address to the members of the Mariological Congress, Pope John Paul wrote that “on the threshold of the third millennium, we want to draw closer to the Mother of God in a special way, to learn from her the attitude of letting go that makes possible a deeper understanding of the mystery of salvation.” He noted that the contemplation of Mary “as she to whom God . . . conferred the special role of being Mother of His Son, is the common experience of faith of the Churches of the East and West. . . . It is good that the very theme of the congress this year clearly indicates the ecumenical character of Mariological reflection.”

The shrine of Czestochowa, which stands on the boundaries between Eastern and Western Europe, between the Eastern and Western Church, was an appropriate site for the congress. Two themes or motifs occurred throughout the many presentations of the Mariological Congress: the presence of Mary in the liturgies of the East and West, and the Virgin Mary as a focus of ecumenical convergence between East and West.

The congress consisted of major addresses at the plenary sessions in the morning, and, in the afternoon, presentations at the nine language groups (English, Croatian, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Lithuanian, Polish, and Latin-American). Each morning, the participants gathered in the chapel of the Jasna Góra for Morning Prayer and Mass, celebrated together in Latin, including a short homily in Latin.

The opening address for the Mariological Congress was given by Fr. Jesús Castellano Cervera, O.C.D. He pointed out how the liturgical texts from the East and West give witness to a faith uniting the churches in their belief and their communion with the Mother of the Savior. Five presentations dealt with the presence of Mary in the Eastern Churches—the Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopian, Armenian, Byzantine. Another five presentations dealt with the presence of Mary in the liturgies of the Western Churches: the Anglican, the Reformed, the Mozarabic, Ambrosian, the Greco-Slavic.

The sessions on Thursday, August 22, 1996, occurred in the Cathedral of Krakow, where the capitulants were welcomed by Francis Cardinal Marcharski, Pope John Paul’s successor in that archdiocese. At the cathedral of Krakow, Fr. René Laurentin gave a conference, “East and West: Convergences and Differences on the Virgin Mary.” After the visit to Crakow, the participants traveled through Wadowice (birthplace of John Paul II) to Auschwitz, the

site of the Nazi concentration camp and the place of martyrdom of St. Maximilian Kolbe and thousands of others victims of the Holocaust.

As the Mariological Congress concluded on Friday, August 23, the Marian Congress—with the theme “Mary and the Eucharist”—began. As was the case in Spain where the 1992 Mariological and Marian congresses of Huelva served as preparation for the Eucharistic Congress of Toledo in 1993, so the 1996 congresses of Czestochowa were a preparation for the 1997 Eucharistic Congress of Wroclaw (Poland).

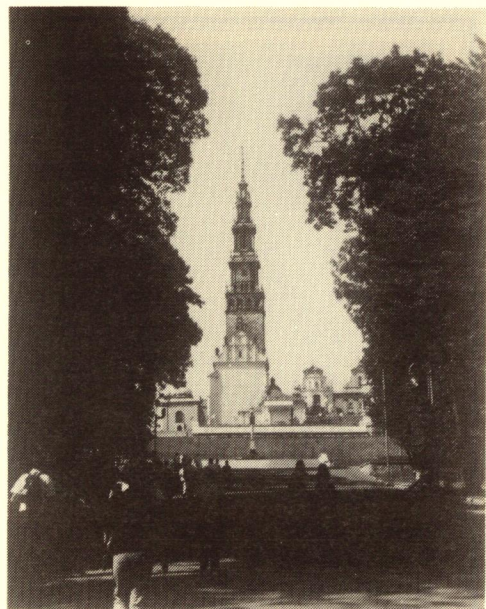
At the Mariological Congress, the papal legate, Adam Cardinal Maida, Archbishop of Detroit and papal legate to the congress, announced that the new president of the Pontifical Marian Academy, replacing Fr. Paul Melada, O.F.M., would be Fr. Gaspar Calvo Moralejo, O.F.M., and the new secretary, Fr. Stefano Cecchin, O.F.M.

The Shrine of Jasna Góra

The heart of the shrine is the miraculous icon of Black Madonna of Czestochowa. Its origins date back to the 14th century, when Prince Vladislaus of Opole established a foundation for the Order of Hermits of St. Paul (Paulines) and gave them the icon of the Virgin Mary brought from Ruthenia. In 1430, the icon was stolen and the precious stones that had been attached to it were ripped off by the sword of the invaders (leaving what appears to be scars on the icon’s face). In 1655, after the routing of invading Swedish armies, the king of Poland, John Casimirus, officially proclaimed Our Lady Queen of Poland. Over the centuries, the pilgrims coming to Czestochowa have included royalty and heads of state, as well as the ordinary folk. Pilgrimage continued during the 123 years that Poland spend under foreign partition (1795–1918), the Second World War, and the period under Communism.

In 1957, a copy of the icon of Czestochowa was sent on a continual pilgrimage throughout the parishes of Poland that was to last twenty-three years as preparation for the millennium of Christianity in Poland (1980).

During the Communist occupation, when the primate of Poland, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński was imprisoned by the Communists in 1954, the custom arose of a short prayer at 9:00 p.m.. Each evening since 1954 crowds gather in the chapel for this service of prayer known as the “Call of Jasna Góra.” “Mary, Mother of Poland, we are with you and we are mindful of your presence. Together with you we keep vigil. . . .”



Czestochowa



Conclusion of the Mariological Congress: (Standing, l-r) Archbishop Stanislaus Nowak of Czestochowa; Archbishop Josef Kowalczyk, Apostolic Nuntio to Poland; Adam Cardinal Maida, Papal Legate to the congresses of Czestochowa; (seated) Josef Cardinal Glomp of Warsaw, Primate of Poland.

During the International Mariological Congress at Czestochowa, Poland, August 18-23, 1997, a meeting composed of representatives from the Marian theological faculties and the Mariological societies was held to consider the advisability of petitioning the Holy See for the dogmatic definition of the Virgin Mary as coredemptrix, mediatrix, and advocate. This meeting at the International Mariological Congress was held at the request of the Holy See. Among the twenty-two members present at the meeting were René Laurentin, Stefano de Fiores, S.M.M., Jesús Castellano Cervera, O.C.D., Ignacio M. Calabuig, O.S.M., and Johann Roten, S.M. The moderator of the meeting was Candido Pozo, S.J., president of the Spanish Mariological Society. Representatives from the Orthodox, Reformed, and Anglican churches were also present.

There was unanimous agreement at the meeting not to petition the Holy See to make such a declaration at

this time. There were two reasons for this decision: the first dealt with the theological clarifications which must first be made, and the second dealt with the ecumenical dialogue.

In accord with the precedent set at Vatican II, the participants agreed that a doctrinal declaration should not "settle questions which have not yet been fully clarified by the work of theologians" (LG 54); they noted that Vatican II had already stated that the "Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix" (LG 62). Although these titles are in common use, they are subject to ambiguous and different interpretations. The word "coredemptrix" did not appear in the magisterium until the pontificate of Pius XII. Earlier in the twentieth century, Pius XI had formed national commissions to study the possibility of a dogmatic definition of Mary as mediatrix. The pneumatological consequences of calling Mary "advocate" must also be carefully studied.

The second reason the theologians gave for recommending that the Holy See not define these Marian prerogatives dealt with the ecumenical dialogue. In the encyclical *Ut unum sint*, Pope John Paul II outlined a path for ecumenical dialogue among all the followers of Christ. The various churches should explore the common ground that unites them together as followers of Christ. He suggests that all Christians consider the Virgin Mary as "Mother of God, icon of the Church, spiritual mother who intercedes for all the disciples of Christ and for the whole of humanity" (n. 79). The theologians wished to follow the line of dialogue as outlined in the encyclical as the way to promote unity among all the churches. Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans and the Reformed were united at Jasna Góra to consider the role of the Virgin Mary in the mystery of Christ. This dialogue at Jasna Góra presents an example of an exchange of views which searches for common ground and which brings together and unites.

Marian Anniversaries: One Hundred and Fifty Years Ago

Immaculate Conception as Patroness of the United States

In 1846, the American bishops—one Archbishop and twenty-two bishops, at the Sixth Provincial Council of Baltimore, 1846—placed the United States "under the special patronage of the holy Mother of God, whose immaculate conception is venerated by the piety of the faithful throughout the Catholic Church." Already in 1791, Bishop John Carroll's Baltimore Synod had named the Virgin Mary as patroness of the Diocese of Baltimore, which then embraced the whole United States.

La Salette

Among the few apparitions which have received ecclesiastical approval in the last century is the event which occurred in La Salette, France, on September 19, 1846. Two shepherds, Melanie, fourteen years old, and Maximim, eleven years old, saw an image of a Beautiful Lady seated, apparently weeping, with her head in her hands. Mary was weeping because the world was unmindful of the cross of Christ. Two sins were specifically mentioned—blaspheming the divine name and disregarding Sunday as the day of rest and worship. She asked the children to pray and make known her message.

The report of the apparitions drew crowds, and within the year two healings occurred which were later recognized as miracles. Five years later, the Bishop of Grenoble stated that the apparition was trustworthy and certain. A positive sign, he said, was the "immense and spontaneous" gathering at the place of the apparitions as well as the miracles which had occurred. The year after the approval the first stone of the church was placed.

The heart of the message was one of reconciliation: Mary was the "reconciler of sinners." The mass "Mary, Mother of Reconciliation" (*Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, #14), was taken from the proper at the shrine of LaSalette. The texts speak of the "mercies" of God "to every creature," and the Virgin Mary is described as having the "heart of compassion for sinners." The congregations of the Missionaries and the Sisters of Our Lady of La Salette are dedicated to spreading the message of reconciliation.

Crowds continued to gather at La Salette, an almost inaccessible village in the Alps. It was not until 1867 that road was opened; before that, all pilgrims arrived on foot or by donkey. In 1872, the Assumptionists organized the first national pilgrimage to La Salette. The shrine is largely responsible for reviving Marian pilgrimage in the 19th century.

In his message to the Diocese of Grenoble and the Missionaries of LaSalette, Pope John Paul II wrote, "In this place, Mary, the mother ever loving, showed her sorrow over moral evil done by humanity. Her tears help us to understand the gravity of sin and of the rejection of God, while manifesting at the same time the passionate fidelity



La Salette

that her son maintains for every person, even though his redeeming love is marked by the wounds of humanity's betrayal and abandonment."

Fifty years ago. . .

On May 1, 1946, Pope Pius XII sent an encyclical to the world's bishops inquiring about devotion to Mary and asked whether "the bodily Assumption of the Immaculate Blessed Virgin can be proposed and defined as a dogma of faith." The doctrine of Mary's Assumption was declared a doctrine of faith on November 1, 1946.

Letters to the Newsletter

The last issue of the Newsletter, containing the articles, "Marian Shrines: Sign of the Pilgrim Church" and "Discerning the Miraculous" brought three letters to the editor.

* * * * *

I was delighted to see that you wrote the article "Marian Shrines: Signs of the Pilgrim Church." I noted that you mentioned that in academic theology shrines were never given any recognition and their existence hardly acknowledged. You will be happy to know that I have just finished putting together an issue of CONCILIUM which is due to appear at the end of 1996 precisely devoted to the theology of pilgrimages. I have long been convinced the contemporary theology and church practice and liturgists are missing out on one of the great manifestations of the sensus fidelium.

Fr. Virgil P. Elizondo
San Antonio, Texas

[Re: the process for discerning apparitions] *I believe that the only apparition that has been approved in recent times is that of Betania (Venezuela). While Bishop Ito approved Akita (Japan) early on, Cardinal Ratzinger asked that a new commission be established. As for Rwanda, more accurately Kibeho, as well as San Nicholas (Argentina), Cuapa (Nicaragua), and possibly others, their bishops have uttered favorable comments, without giving a formal approval.*

Rev. Msgr. Matthew G. Malnar
Independence, Wisconsin

* * * * *

I have just finished reading the issue of "The Marian Library Newsletter" on shrines and Marian apparitions. What strikes me as particularly helpful is that you have taken a topic of very popular Catholic piety and have approached it in a serious but not overacademic way. That is indeed a trick and I think you have done it well.

Fr. John D. Mulligan, S.M.
Dayton, Ohio

Advent is the season of the seed, which the Word of God sown in the human heart. . . If we have truly given ourselves to be changed into Christ, it is essential to us that we do not disturb this time of growth. It is a time of darkness, of faith. We shall not see Christ's radiance in our lives; yet it is still hidden in our darkness; nevertheless, we must believe that He is growing in our lives; we must believe it so firmly that we cannot help relating everything, literally everything, to this almost incredible reality." Caryll Houselander, *The Reed of God*.

Marian Library Studies, vol. 24 (1992-95), 268 pp., "Im Zeichen der Ellipse, Hans Urs von Balthusars theologische Anthropologie," Johann G. Roten, S.M. (the first part of a study on Urs Von Balthasar's theological anthropology); "Newman's Use of Sacred Scripture in Texts on the Incarnation and Mary," John F. Britt; "To a Great Servant of the Church: Henri Cardinal de Lubac," Theodore Koehler, S.M. Price \$40.00 for libraries, \$30.00 for personal orders.

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